

Some First Thoughts of Gratitude for Sunday's Celebration of our Thirty-Nine Years of Service

by Dale

Eddie wouldn't give me the mic yesterday. I had a lot of thoughts as waves of love and gratitude flowed back and forth across our sanctuary. But Eddie wouldn't give me the mic. This was in fact a great kindness to me as I would have gotten into thanking people with its consequent risk of leaving out some who are nearest and dearest to Debbie and me. And I would have spent Sunday afternoon beating myself up for those I'd left out. But, hey, Coach Kerr left out Steph Curry, so we'd all be in great company. Anyway it's Monday morning now and my heart tells me folks have to be thanked big time even if no expressions of gratitude can possibly be complete or account for the importance of each and every person in our church family to Debbie and me.

So roughly this is what I would have said yesterday, if Eddie had given me the mic. Which he didn't.

O.K., so that's why I couldn't find a Sunday program Friday morning when I first got back to the office after a week or so away! I looked in Sandy's office. I looked in the lobby. But no program. But, hey, Brandon maybe has his own rhythms, so I gave it little thought.

Of course I have to start with thanking Eddie for his wondrous love so evident in the all the thought and production values put into the celebration, and Sylvia who for the umpteenth time did all it took behind the scenes to make such events magical.

And then I think back over the years, and my heart nearly bursts with gratitude for everyone in the room from Sylvia, Joan, and Wayne and Louella who were here in 1978 when we arrived to the wonderful people I see in the crowd who have come most recently, Tyler and Tatiana and Nate, and Patti and Tom, and Frank. And then, a great big thank you to those who came from a distance to be with us, Ken and Bing, Clare, Winkleson and Angeline, Kim and Marty. What a clever entrance, Kim! And special thanks to those who weighed in by video, Bob and Judy (Judy, get well!), Jamin, John Paul, Annie, Clark and Sallie and Lincoln and Autumn (who must have been hiding out in their bedroom filming their love some stolen moment we were with them last week in Colorado), Kim, and in their own amazingly creative way, Jim and Rose. And Naomi. And Naomi. What a brilliant way to end the video section. I thought we were done, and then, a surprise that teared me up.

And then there were the local tributes. John is like a brother to me. Lori like a sister, and her remembrances of our service together for Shiloh deeply moved me. Those were some of our finest years. Then, thank you to Jeffary. When the mic opened up, I quietly hoped Jeffary would leap to the front of the line. And he did. Jeffary is like a son to me. And Laconia: what can we say of the one we have known the longest (since the summer of 1975) and to whom we are most

deeply bonded! As I look out I see Robert and I am so honored to have seen how the gospel of Jesus has made him the man of faith he's become. And I see Curt whom I'm always proud to call my dear friend. And I see Sandy who ... well, is wonderful and also my co-conspirator in the church office. And Jamie who sort of upgraded my office when my elders "kicked me out of my old one." ☺ Speaking of elders, I still sense in the room the spirit of J.G. who taught us freedom in Christ and Bill who showed us what a servant heart looks like. And then there's our current eldership who together (and together they are) are our finest ever, elders of vision, grace, justice, courage, and remarkable wisdom. They are my elders but more than that they are each my friends. Tony, just a reminder, the Newtown book sale is just around the corner. (Thought I'd throw that in while I thought of it). And then there's Art and Julie who are like shepherds to me.

On and on the memories go. Of dinners (thank you, Daryl and Yolanda and others), and lunches (thank you, Wendell and others), and breakfasts. Of a barge trip down the Canal du Midi with Ken and Bing. Of work parties and picnics. And of struggles for things that mattered – gender justice, gender equality, and now respect and full acceptance of our LGBT brothers and sisters in Christ. And those intellectually hard-working souls who have with me searched out truth in our Interfaith Book Club and facts in our Readings in Current Affairs. On and on. On and on.

But I end with this – Brandon's call to worship. Did he nail that! Yes, "blessed" was the word for the morning, delivered with power, presence, poise and passion. And of the things that make me happiest on this grand, loving morning you and Sierra are at the top of my list.

It's been a great 39 years! But I have absolutely no doubt the best years are all ahead.

That's pretty much what I would have said. If Eddie had given me the mic. Which he didn't. But now it's Monday morning, and another whole wave of great people, great friends, present and past, wash over me.